

# THE TALON

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 05-07



## TASK FORCE ADLER'S NEWEST SERGEANT MORALES MEMBER

In the background his profession, in the forefront  
his credentials, SSG Todd Parsons makes the cut  
Story on Page 42





# TRANSITIONING WITH THE PROPER FOCUS

COL Frederick A. Cross

I'm happy to greet you with this edition of the Talon; highlighting the outstanding accomplishments of Soldiers and Civilians from across this great Task Force. Their stories provide you a glimpse of the various skills, knowledge, courage, and selfless service exhibited by all

the outstanding men and women that answer the call to duty daily; placing service before self. Everyday I thank my Lord and Savior that He has blessed and entrusted me to command at this time and provided me with the best team of Soldiers, Civilians, and Family

members one could imagine. It continues to be my distinct honor and privilege to command such a force. As I have said from day one; it's all about the TEAM.

Since our last publication I have had the opportunity to travel across the theater and observe

Soldiers and Leaders in action. I can report to all that the morale and spirit of Task Force Adler Soldiers is extremely high. I was truly impressed, but not surprised by how well Soldiers were performing their assigned tasks; most often above the required standard. In the

continuous learning environment of Iraq, our Soldiers and Leaders continue to sharpen their skills and expertise, becoming more proficient in the tasks and functions required to accomplish the mission. As we move ever closer to our transition, you've acquired valuable knowledge in the execution of your mission; knowledge that must be passed on to the incoming unit and personnel. Are you prepared not only for the transfer of authority, but for the transfer of knowledge?

A large part of our success

the various activities involved in the transition and redeployment of personnel and equipment. We must be vigilant and on guard against the negative forces that can play havoc on the success of the unit and detract us from our mission. The negative forces I refer to are complacency and apathy. We cannot afford for either to work its way into any of our activities. I demand that Soldiers take a personal assessment and leaders insure that your responsibilities are executed with the same diligence and attention to

**Teamwork:** COL Fredrick A. Cross congratulates SSG Deanna Campbell, the Assistant Project Manager for Commercialization Upgrade Platoon for C Co 440th Signal Battalion. With the help of Campbell's reenlistment, Task Force Adler accomplished their retention mission eight months into this fiscal year.

will be measured on how well we assist the follow-on unit to carry on with the mission. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to insure that our replacements are fully on-board with every tactic, technique and procedure (TTP) we used to successfully conduct the mission and maintain force protection and safety...a priority throughout the entire transfer process.

Transitions are a dangerous and stressful period for both the incoming and the outgoing organization. As a unit we can clearly see the light at the end of the tunnel; but my message to you remains; do not get blinded or develop tunnel vision...our mission is not over until it is over. Our mission continues and force protection and Soldiers safety remains a primary concern of mine, especially during

detail as it was in the beginning of the deployment.

Regardless of the time spent on the ground or the time remaining in Iraq, the mission comes first. As leaders, it's our responsibility to assess that mission and apply the proper risk mitigation strategy in order to decrease as much risk to Soldiers and equipment as possible.

The professionalism, courage, pride and energy of the men and women of TF Alder and the entire 22nd Signal Brigade is evident each time you execute a given task. Every Soldier and Civilian is a part of a larger element; and what makes this unit successful is our ability to respect one another and work together as a unit. Let's continue this momentum and focus throughout the entire transition and redeployment process. TEAMWORK will make it happen!





Over the past months, your sacrifices and those of your comrades before you have helped bring the Iraqi people freedom, a democratically elected government, and a chance for the future. However, we must continue to remain vigilant until we are replaced and our planes touch down safely in Germany and in the United States. It is not over until it's over. Over the next 100 days there will be a tremendous amount of movement across the battle space. Leaders must focus, enforce standards and be vigilant of complacency.

As leaders, it is absolutely imperative that we are relentless in enforcing standards. The Army lost another

young Soldier last week to a negligent discharge. The loss of even one Soldier to a preventable accident is intolerable and we as leaders, cannot stand for it. We must stop complacency before it begins and train our Soldiers so we'll never have to tell another family member their loved one died from lack of training or something a leader could have prevented.

**Negligent Discharges:** In the last two years, the Multinational Task Force has lost 16 warriors to negligent discharge, with another 97 injured. That's an entire Signal company of warriors dead or off the battlefield because of the negligence of the weapons

handler, as well as the handler's NCO.

There are no accidental discharges. A civilian who has never been trained on safe weapons handling can have an accident. Those of us in uniform can only be negligent, because we have been properly and thoroughly trained.

I need leaders to immediately review and oversee our weapons clearing procedures to ensure they follow established safety and supervisory needs.

**Heat Injuries:** Heat Injuries continue to take a toll on our Soldiers. Last year the Army had over 1,700 reported heat injuries and 6 heat related deaths. Pre-

## Vehicle Safety

Rollover Drills

Heat Casualties



**Task Force Adler : 80% MISSION COMPLETE . . .**

**but it's not over until every Soldier returns safely to home station.**

venting heat injuries is a command team responsibility. Leaders must ensure Soldiers follow the proper preventive measures.

**Rollover Drills:** Teach Soldiers the following TTP's to help prevent HMMWV rollover accidents:

Ensure drivers are trained in accident avoidance and hands-on skills improvement by implementing and resourcing a program such as the Army Safe Driver Training.

Ensure Soldiers know that they are required to wear seatbelts at all times, on or off the FOB and that they understand the risks associated with not wearing seatbelts. Enforce seatbelt usage and conduct spot-checks.

Ultimately, much of the safety and well-being of our Soldiers lies in the hands of our first line leaders. In the end, Soldiers are the ones to pay the price in needless deaths and accidents. Standards and discipline are a primary responsibility of every leader. From the youngest corporals to the Task Force Commander, we are the trainers and guardians of the standard.

This mission is not over, and if complacency sets in, our Soldiers will pay the price. Eternal vigilance is the price of safety. Every leader must make risk mitigation a priority. We need every Soldier trained, ready, and fit to fight at any time. We cannot afford to lose even one Soldier! Leaders must speak with their Soldiers constantly about safety. Together, we can take this on and prevent further loss of life! Teamwork!





**ANDREA CUARTAS--**

**U.S. CITIZEN**

After three years of paperwork, testing, interviewing, and waiting, three Task Force Adler Soldiers finally attain their citizenship, among them SPC Andrea Cuartes by SPC Michael Howard





COL David A. Lambert, the MNC-I deputy C-1, announces his appreciation for 83 Soldiers from 40 countries as they formally become .



Spc. Andrea Cuartas poses with her new citizenship papers. Cuartas earned her citizenship in a ceremony here May 20.

**A** process three years in the making, SPC Andrea M. Cuartas reached a milestone. A smile was fixed on her face as she swore to “support and defend the Constitution and bear true faith and allegiance to the same,” alongside 82 other Soldiers from 40 countries in a ceremony May 15. Cuartas is stationed at Victory Base in Iraq.

“As new citizens, from today on, you’ll be able to fully pursue your version of the American dream. Relish your success,

because you’ve truly earned it,” said Ann Corsano, a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Deputy District Director in Rome.

Corsano, Walter Haye with the Citizenship and Immigration Service from Frankfurt, and COL David A. Lambert, the MNC-I deputy C-1 presented certificates affirming the naturalization of each Soldier.

The process of becoming a citizen stretched over 3 years for Cuartas. “I started my paperwork

when I was in Germany, but it got lost. When I came to Iraq, I started doing it again, with legal helping me this time. That helped a lot.”

To become citizens, applicants must fill out a lengthy application. They must provide proof of military service and biographical background data to minimize security issues. The applicant’s fingerprints are sent to the FBI. Any mistake can result in a kickback, so it can be a very long process. Cuartas joined the military right after high school because she admired the way all citizens served

in her native country of Columbia, and she wanted to do the same for her country. “In my country, everyone serves in the army, and I really like that. So I want to do that for this country. I live here, and I’ve spent more time here than I have in Columbia. For me, this is my country, so I want to do what I can to help it,” said Cuartas.

Becoming a U.S. citizen will expand Cuartas’ options in both the civilian and military worlds. A range of new military occupational specialties will open up for her, as she will now be







## CITIZENSHIP

allowed to obtain a security clearance. She will also be able to stay in the military indefinitely if she so desires. Soldiers are unable to reenlist after eight years if they are not U.S. Citizens, unless they are deployed in a period of official conflict.

Cuartas' family moved to the U.S. seeking employment and new opportunities, said Cuartas. They are not citizens yet, but are proud of her for what she has accomplished.

SFC Michelle D. Wilson hugs and congratulates Spc. Wendy L. Roscoe of the 440th Signal Battalion and Spc. Margret A. Cadiente after the ceremony.

"My family members are still residents, but my dad will be a citizen soon. They're happy for me, though. They always wanted me to become a citizen," said Cuartas.

Cuartas, however, almost feels as though little has changed, at least for now. "I feel like I've been a citizen from the beginning, I've been serving in the army now for three years I've always wanted to be an American, to have the papers, and now I am. And I want to serve this country. That's why I want to be an American citizen."

Two of Cuartas' fellow Task Force Adler Soldiers, SPC Wendy L. Roscoe of the 440th Signal Battalion and SPC Margret A. Cadiente, became citizens at the same ceremony.



# SPECIAL DELIVERY

When the 32d Signal Battalion recieved a shipment of Girl Scout Cookies from a local troop, Soldiers decided to share the bounty with those less fortunate. How a shipment of cookies turned into a humanitarian mission by CPT Allison Hanger

Members of the 32d Signal Battalion recently conducted two Civil Affair goodwill missions to schools in Iraq, delivering Girl Scout cookies, soccer balls, shoes, socks, and ice cream to Iraqi children and families. This CA mission was inspired by the generosity of Girl Scout troops in the state of New York who provided the cookies as a symbol of support to Soldiers serving combat tours in Iraq. Over 70 cases (1000 boxes) of Girl Scout cookies arrived on the doorstep of the 32d Signal Battalion on Logistical Support Area (LSA) Anaconda from Girl Scout troops out of Nassau County, New York, in an effort to bring a little bit of home to those fighting far away. The two pallets of cookies were shipped free of charge with the support of Miss Cathy O'Reilly of the DHL shipping company.

"The shipments of Girl Scout Cookies are just one way that Girl



A young Iraqi girl holds her cookies and smiles



CH (CPT) Dave Stoner prepares to hand out treats



Scouts throughout Nassau County, NY have been able to show their support for our Servicemen and women. Many of the Girl Scout troops have adopted Military units and have written letters, sent care packages and worked with the families here at home who are waiting for their loved ones to return,” said Donna Ceravolo, Executive Director of the Girl Scouts of Nassau County. “We are very proud to be able to provide a small ‘taste of home’ to our Servicemen and

Women and want to thank all of our Cookie sponsors who helped make this possible.” While Soldiers were grateful for the generous donation, they thought it was better spent on those less fortunate. “The incredible effort of these young Americans has enabled this Battalion to have an impact on one the local Iraqi community; to make a difference in a positive way,” said Lieutenant Colonel William S. Schumaker, Commander of the 32d Signal

Battalion. Battalion Chaplain CH (CPT) David Stoner teamed up with the 1-8th Infantry Battalion to locate a local Iraqi village where the cookies might be more appreciated, and decided on the a nearby school. Along with Soldiers from Delta, 1-8th Infantry, 3d BCT, 4ID from Forward Operating Base O’Ryan, members of the 32d Signal Battalion convoyed to the school on May 22nd and June 15th of 2006. This school educates approximately 100 students in less

than ideal conditions. The school has few furnishings, no electricity, and only a single chalkboard on the wall to use as a learning aid. During the first trip, Soldiers delivered ice cream, shoes, socks, and the Girl Scout cookies to the children at the Shamooz school. “It was a real blessing to see the children with the simple things we gave them. You would have thought it was Christmas!” said CH (CPT) Stoner. The success of the first goodwill convoy prompted







Iraqi children and their cookies



CH (CPT) Dave Stoner walks with his new friends

a second trip to a pro-American village. LTC Schumaker, serving as senior member of the convoy, led his troops to the village, eager to meet with the village leaders and make new friends. As the convoy pulled up to the village, Soldiers spotted two children who quickly alerted their siblings and neighbors and moments later there were 40-50 children waving, clapping, and jumping up and down as the Soldiers rolled up to the school. The children immediately gravitated towards the Soldiers, eager to receive anything they might have to give. “The civil affairs mission was an amazing experience. I enjoyed the opportunity to go outside the wire and interact with the Iraqi people, see how they live, and to see this village’s gratitude

and appreciation for the US troops,” said 1LT Bridget Yearwood, 32d Signal Battalion S-2. 1LT Yearwood, along with other members of the battalion, handed out soccer balls along with the cookies and had tea with local Iraqi community leaders. Participating in the Arab tradition of hospitality, the Chi’ (tea) break afforded the leaders on both sides to explore the challenges of the current situation. Through an interpreter, the village leadership expressed needs for better electrical power, improvements in the school, medical support and the continuous improvement in the relationship with the US forces. On behalf of the village Sheik, the members of the 32d were welcomed to return at any time.

Those participants in this goodwill mission had the amazing opportunity to see life “outside the wire” and also learned about the goals of the members of these villages and what their priorities are in these difficult times. Members of local Iraqi communities are anxious to build up businesses and community activities in an effort to get their village economy back on track. Thanks to the efforts DHL and many schools in the New York area, over 1000 pairs of shoes, soccer balls, and hygiene products are on their way to LSA Anaconda for sorting and distribution to more Iraqi families. The Soldiers of the 32d Signal Battalion are eager to receive this shipment and continue to provide much needed support to local villages in Iraq.





Tasked to commercialize the western Ninevah Province, which is somewhat notorious for its wild and unpredictable nature, the joint efforts of the warfighter and the signaler have combined to make it a little more tame By 1LT Allison Hill

**N**ovember 2005. Mud everywhere. A dirty green tent, the inherited company CP. The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment had rolled back from Tal Afar tired after its major offensive in the city, but proud of its accomplishments. Enter B Company, 29th Signal Battalion. Task Force Swampdog, consisting of 193 Soldiers from five different companies, conducted its first of many reliefs in place and assumed control of the network. The Swampdogs also began improving work areas across the FOB as well as in Tal Afar by improving the various signal sites, constructing a company TOC building, and improving force protection. Beginning with a pure Mobile Subscriber Equipment tactical network, B Company gradually integrated modern communications equipment and transitioned to a fully commercialized network. All things considered,

SFC Greenwell, SGT Ross, and SGT Antonio of the 29th Signal Battalion continue construction on their company TOC.

Task Force Swampdog has run the gamut of communications equipment from legacy to cutting edge technology. Adapting to the changing demands of a volatile battlespace, B Company adjusted fluidly to the departure of 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, the arrival of 1/1

Armored Division and the integration of its signal company, the brigade's subsequent departure three months later, and the downsizing to two maneuver battalions. Even though priorities for commercial equipment, particularly fiber optic cable, remained at the Mosul Airfield and FOB Marez, the Soldiers resorted to alternative transmission media through the use of modems to replace tactical signal assemblages with COTS (commercial off the shelf) equipment. The expansion and contraction of the network within the western Ninevah province was made possible through the creative solutions the Soldiers identified and executed.

# HOW THE WEST WAS WON



## 29TH SIGNAL BATTALION

In early June, the company received a Corps tasking to provide data and voice services to five company outposts in the city of Tal Afar. Assessing the impact of deploying five Small Extension Nodes into the city, the leadership devised a commercial solution in which line-of-sight radios (AN/30) were used in conjunction with lasers able to transmit and receive

data (Free Space Optics). SGT Reed, SPC Grundmeyer, and SPC Tejada configured, installed, and managed the equipment with the notable assistance of Dave Harker, the network engineer for northern Iraq, for the first time in a tactical environment. Throughout the five-day mission, the Soldiers faced numerous challenges and overcame significant hurdles, finding

creative solutions to the difficult problems they faced. For example, SSG Chapman and SGT Chau fabricated a mount for their AN-30 at the Granary, combining a 15-meter mast, SHF rotator/tilter kit, mast accessory bag, and flex-cuffs. SPC Grundmeyer and SPC Tejada came up with new and effective methods of mounting the FSOs on walls, roofs, and special stands

designed by the Swampdog motor pool. These innovations replaced the communications services that would otherwise have required five Small Extension Nodes and up to 30 Soldiers to support. While preparations for 1st Platoon continued in anticipation of the new Tal Afar mission, 2nd Platoon was equally busy back at FOB Sykes setting up the new Technical

Control Facility (TCF). Since the new equipment would run off the commercial network at MAF and the expansion of COTS equipment on FOB Sykes would emphasize its need, the Swampdogs pulled the first shot into the newly acquired and populated TCF through one of two TACSAT links coming into the FOB. The TCF serves as the hub of all commercial communications

on FOB Sykes and the surrounding outsites. The new TCF started with two transit cases containing routers, switches, and TACLANes as well as computers to monitor the network. In three short days, 2nd Platoon had a fully operational and functioning TCF, reacting with remarkable alacrity to the demands placed upon them to make the Tall Afar mission a success. Shortly

SPC Grundmeyer and SPC Tejada make adjustments to the FSO link at the Castle in Tall Afar.





after the installation and setup of the TCF, 1st Platoon personnel took over the management of the TCF as 2nd Platoon began early retrograde preparations, made possible due to the commercialization efforts freeing up the use of several SEN teams and an entire node center.

B Company tackled the next step in the commercialization of Tal Afar. This next step involved the commercialization of outsites at Sinjar and Ribiyah. In an effort to improve services and facilitate communications on the VOIP network, commercial data packages provided the solution and decreased the manning requirements at outsites where SEN teams previously provided services. Two two-Soldier teams received and inventoried the equipment and then launched into the test shot phase of the commercialization. After executing two successful test shots and validating all equipment at FOB Sykes, the two teams moved out to Sinjar and Ribiyah. The teams' efforts ensured the rapid commercialization of both sites, freeing up SEN teams A67 and A69 for use in future missions.

From the initial MSE mission with 3ACR to the most current commercialization missions under the 172d SBCT, B Company executed over 30 RIPs and jumps within the western Ninevah Province. Soldiers from B Company, D Company, HHC, 842d Signal Company, and C/40th Signal Company came together to effectively execute the wide variety of missions delegated to them with enthusiasm, vigor, and tenacity. Due to the collaboration of many minds and bodies, the commercialization of Sykes, Castle, Granary, Hard Rock, Burma, Alcatraz, Sinjar, and Ribiyah occurred safely and efficiently, simultaneously minimizing the tactical footprint and improving services to the warfighter. Although the western Ninevah Province was somewhat notorious for its wild and unpredictable nature, the joint efforts of the warfighter and the signaleer have combined to make it a little more tame.

SGT Coopwood and SPC Kenimer test the data stacks for Ribiyah.





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HEADQUARTERS

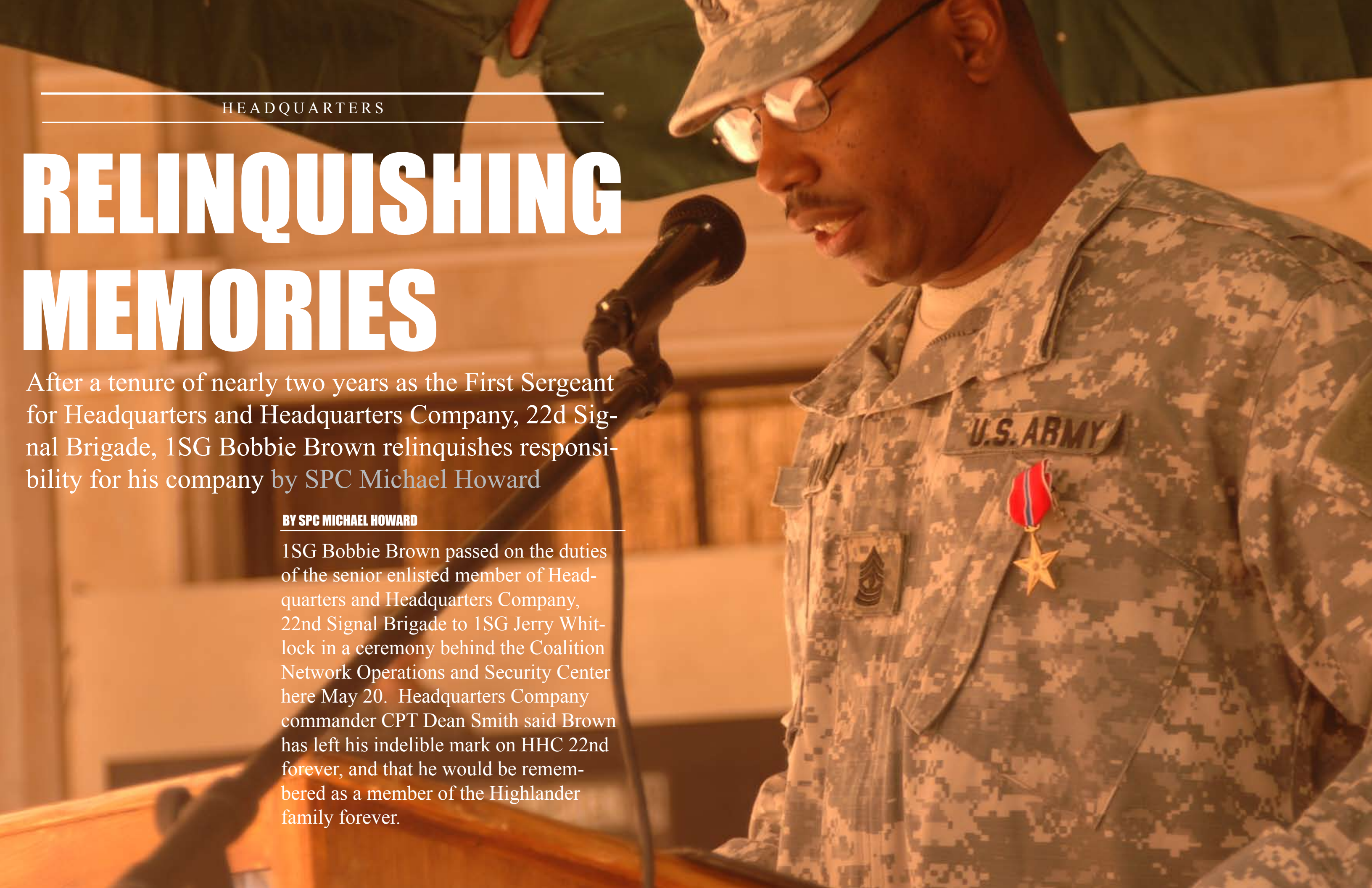
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# RELINQUISHING MEMORIES

After a tenure of nearly two years as the First Sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 22d Signal Brigade, 1SG Bobbie Brown relinquishes responsibility for his company by SPC Michael Howard

**BY SPC MICHAEL HOWARD**

1SG Bobbie Brown passed on the duties of the senior enlisted member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 22nd Signal Brigade to 1SG Jerry Whitlock in a ceremony behind the Coalition Network Operations and Security Center here May 20. Headquarters Company commander CPT Dean Smith said Brown has left his indelible mark on HHC 22nd forever, and that he would be remembered as a member of the Highlander family forever.





“First Sergeant Brown, you are a leader and a warrior who truly defines the meaning of sacrifice. You have inspired me, and this entire Task Force. It is an absolute honor to serve with you. On behalf of all the Highlanders, thank you for your dedication and service. You are a true American hero.” Brown aimed most of his comments during the ceremony at praising and thanking God and his fellow leaders and the Soldiers and NCOs of Task Force Adler. “Let me first begin by giving my humble thanks to God, for bringing all of us together, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, because I realize that there cannot be a yesterday, today, or tomorrow without his intervention. He is indeed the grand architect of the universe. I have an opportunity to say goodbye to a courageous Task Force, and finally an opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to the officers, young Soldiers, and NCOs who have made the last 5 years an absolutely honorable experience. I’ve been blessed to have each of you as a friend and I thank you all for what you’ve done for my family, and for teaching an old dog a new trick.” Brown’s leaves Headquarters Company, 22d Signal Brigade to attend the Sergeants Major academy in Ft. Bliss, TX.

Whitlock said he is eager to continue Brown’s high standard of leadership, and honored that he was chosen as successor to Brown. “I have only one goal. I want to bring every Soldier and piece of equipment in this company back safely and in one piece, and to deactivate this brigade with everyone here and safe.” “First Sergeant Whitlock, on behalf of the Highlander family, welcome to a new level of leadership. We are at war, in the



I have only one goal. I want to bring every Soldier and piece of equipment in this company back safely and in one piece.



battle, fighting the fight for our nation’s sake. I have the utmost confidence in you, and I look forward to bringing our team together, and taking these fine Soldiers home,” said Smith. Brown’s military and civilian education includes the USASMA First Sergeants Course; the Advanced NCO Course; the Basic NCO Course (Honor Graduate); and the Battlefield Spectrum Management Course. He has a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Delaware State University. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal; the Meritorious Service Medal with

oak leaf cluster; the Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters; the Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters; the Military Outstanding Volunteer Medal; the Good Conduct Medal (seventh award), the National Defense Service Medal with star; the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; the Korean Defense Service Medal, the NCO Development Ribbon with numeral 4; and the Overseas Service Ribbon. He is married to the former Shirley Ann Johnson of Hughes, Arkansas. They have four children, Justin, JaNee, JaVon, and Jordan.

At the front of a line of well-wishers, SPC Sherrie Milton shares a final moment before 1SG Bobbie Brown’s impending departure at Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 22d Signal Brigade’s Change of Responsibility Ceremony.

From left, 1SG Bobbie Brown, the outgoing first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 22d Signal Brigade, CPT Dean Smith, the Headquarters Company commander, and 1SG Jerry Whitlock, the incoming first sergeant for Headquarters Company.





# MISSION

**Task Force Adler**

Camp Victory, Iraq

1234

DATE **June 2, 2006**



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# ACCOMPLISHED





Left: COL Fredrick A. Cross and SGM Basil Adams pose with three of the latest reenlistees from the 440th Signal Battalion to symbolize the more than 7.2 million dollars that the Army has paid out to Task Force Adler Soldiers in the form of reenlistment bonuses. Right: SSG Deanna Campbell reenlists indefinitely, becoming the reenlistment that fulfills Task Force Adler's annual goal.

Saldana, an S1 NCO with HHC 22d who recently reenlisted. In the first 8 months of their year-long deployment to Iraq, Soldiers of Task Force Adler have been paid over \$7.3 million in re-enlistment bonuses. MSG Nault expects the Task Force to surpass the \$8 million mark at the very least by the

end of the deployment. Maintaining a volunteer Army isn't cheap. Military pay raises and entitlements have grown strikingly over the past twenty years to compete with the civilian sector. The Army has a variety of Bonus programs to promote Re-Enlistment and to ask our Soldiers to volunteer again. This accounts for the millions of dollars in re-enlistment incentives to the Soldiers of 22d Signal Brigade & Task Force Adler. Bonuses and choice of duty station help, but a great career coun-



Eight months into the fiscal year, Task Force Adler has already met its retention goals. Despite being in a unit facing deactivation, all-time-high bonuses, MOS reclassifications, and choice of duty station are causing Task Force Soldiers to re-up in greater numbers than ever before by SPC Michael Howard

**T**he 22d Signal Brigade has been deployed to Iraq for 20 of the past 36 months. Yet, Soldiers still reenlist to serve.

Task Force Adler's portion of the challenge was to reenlist 208 Initial, 114 Mid-Career & 72 Career Soldiers this fiscal

year. Eight months into this fiscal year, with the reenlistment of SSG Deanna Campbell, the Assistant Project Manager for Commercialization Upgrade Platoon for C Co 440th Signal Battalion; Task Force Adler accomplished that mission. SSG Campbell chose to stay Army because she has goals in her life,

and the Army helps her accomplish them. "I still have goals that I set for myself in the beginning and I would like to accomplish them. I see events in life as a stepping stones and the Army is a big stepping stone for me," said Campbell. For Campbell, the Army was a perfect fit, and so she stayed. More

and more Task Force Adler Soldiers are coming to this conclusion, allowing the yearly retention standard to be met in a matter of months. Task Force Adler's retention office is able to give offers of reclassification, assignments, stabilization, and a variety of bonuses, and Soldiers are taking advantage of it. Soldiers like CPL Isabel Saldana.

"The money definitely plays a big part in the decision," says

**I see events in life as stepping stones and the Army is a big stepping stone for me. - SSG Deanna Campbell**

selor can make all the difference in the world. CSM Thomas J. Clark, the Command Sergeant Major of Task Force Adler, credits his career counselor for the high number of Soldiers choosing to continue their time in the Army. "MSG Nault works harder than any other career counselor I have seen during my years of service. He always puts the Soldier first, and I have never seen someone so committed to helping Soldiers reach their goals."



## TASK FORCE ADLER

**M**SG Joseph Nault and his retention office have put in more hours than any other re-enlistment team

in V Corps to ensure that Soldiers' needs are taken care of.

"The success of the Retention Program was based on an "Individual" approach to retention," said Nault. "The leadership at all levels realized that different Soldiers reenlist for different reasons. Task Force Adler focused the attention to Soldiers who were in over strength MOSs by providing them the opportunity to not only receive a deployment bonus, but also provide reclassification into another MOS. "Now that most Task Force Adler Soldiers are within 12 months of DEROS, we have been working with the various MOS Branches to secure assignments for reenlistment," said Nault.

SSG Cambell agrees, saying that her career counselor, SSG Michelle Smith, literally couldn't

have been any better. "Out of one to ten I would rate her a ten," she said.



Clockwise from Bottom right: MSG Joseph Nault, the Task Force Adler Career Counselor goes over a reenlistment contract with SGT William Slaton, MSG Nault at the reenlistment that met his goals, COL Cross congratulates SSG Deanna Smith on her reenlistment; CH Florio Peirre congratulates SSG Campbell on her reenlistment. COL Fredrick A Cross congratulates SSG Michelle Smith on meeting her retention goals;

strength MOSs that had no potential for promotion and advancement due to realignment of several Signal MOSs. The Task Force Adler retention office was able to offer these soldiers MOSs that offered new schooling, increased opportunity for promotion, and even college credits. The tax-free bonus, incidentally, helps to provide the instant gratification some Soldiers may find pleasing.

And for some, it's not about money or a new job, it's a lifestyle, said Campbell. "If you surround yourself by positive people the Army can be a great experience, there is no limit to where you can go all it takes is a little hard work and self motivation along with the right leadership. There is an abundance of opportunity." Opportunity for both the Soldiers who choose to reenlist, and the Task Force that has the privilege of retaining them.

**F**or others, re-enlisting is about more than the money. It's the about opportunity to serve in the Army in a new and different capacity or in a different place. When Task Force Adler first arrived in theater, there were a large number of soldiers in over





Ron Harris

# Military Muscle

Ok. Something's really wrong here. That last warm-up set felt like a working set, and now the weight that should allow an easy ten reps feels like a ton of bricks. You were lucky to eke out five reps! And what about a pump? It barely feels like there's any blood circulating in your muscles at all. Just what is happening here? You're experiencing a crappy workout, that's what. It happens to all of us from time to time. These are the days when instead of wanting to tear up the gym and hoist every plate in the building, you'd rather go home and lie down. Maybe you could curl up with your favorite teddy bear or Teletubby doll, turn out the lights, and try to forget the whole bad workout experience. I can't let you off the hook that easy! Great workouts are the only way your physique can possibly improve. In this article, I want to give you two valuable tools; how to prevent a lackluster workout, and how to salvage one already in progress.

## PREVENTING A BAD WORKOUT

### Get Plenty of Sleep

In most cases of poor workouts, fatigue is either partially or totally responsible. Many people now work in excess of fifty hours a week these days, both to advance their careers and to be able to afford the latest sports cars, cellular phones, high-power laptop computers, and homes. For those with further responsibilities such as children or continuing education, the standard eight hours of sleep a night is nothing more than a distant memory. However, there is no way you will train at your peak levels if your body and mind are not allowed sufficient recuperation and regeneration. If you have the opportunity to take "power naps" of even twenty or thirty minutes a day, by all means do so. Another way to catch up on your rest is on weekends. Sleeping twelve hours Saturday night can make a big difference in making up for a week of inadequate

sleep. A final recommendation on this topic is to cut back on your television viewing at night. It might be "must-see" T.V. from the standpoint of the networks who want you to watch their advertisers' commercials, but you must get a good night's sleep.

### Train Only Every Other Day

Much of the reason people experience bad workouts is simply because they are overtrained. If you keep careful track of your own performances and energy levels, you will often find that by the second or third day in a row of training, your energy and enthusiasm levels have plunged. This happens regardless of how you split up the parts being trained. The body as a whole needs time to recover, as the nervous system goes through a brutal attack each time you train. Whenever you train two days or more in a row, you are compromising the quality of your workouts. Allow a complete day of rest between each training session, and you should return to the gym refreshed and ready to kick some butt every time.

### Eat Right and Take Your Supplements

Another culprit in criminally cruddy workouts is poor nutrition and lack of supplementation. Many people, especially women, will train after work despite not having eaten anything since lunch. What are they thinking? These same people would never dream of starting a long car trip on an empty tank, yet they think nothing of going through a heavy leg session while hungry. It's not hard: eat every two hours, and especially eat a good meal with protein and complex carbs ninety minutes to two hours before engaging in weight training. Meal replacement powders and bars make this very easy to accomplish these days. Also, certain supplements have been proven to improve concentration, focus, and strength. They are caffeine,





ephedrine, ginkgo biloba, and creatine monohydrate. Taken thirty minutes before exercise, these four items alone are enough to have you champing at the bit to get pumped.

### Flip Through Magazines Before Training

Humans are highly visual creatures, and as such we are very motivated by images. If you can take just a couple minutes before training to look at training photos of some of the world's elite physiques, you will have an imprint inside your mind that will serve to inspire you to greater performance. Seeing a 250-pound man in contest condition going through the same exercises you do is awe-inspiring. Some of the best hardcore gyms I have ever visited recognized this, and actually festooned their walls with training and posing photos of greats like Arnold, Tom Platz, Lee Haney, and Dorian Yates. You might not want to necessarily look like the pro's, or have the genetics to do so, but we can all certainly derive tremendous inspiration from them.

### Write Down Your Goals and Review Them Often

It's easy to have a bad workout when you're not even sure why it is that you're at the gym in the first place. People in this situation are easy to spot, as they have an annoying tendency to spend a great deal of time looking lost

and confused, as if they're waiting for some sort of divine sign to tell them what to do next. The total opposite is the person who goes to the gym with a clear purpose. Taken one step further, the most focused and intense people in the gym are those who are in the process of achieving very well-defined goals which they have written down on paper, developed gameplans for, and review often.

Sit down right now and decide what it is you want to accomplish with your training in the next, say, three months. Write down a list. It may include things like adding an inch to your arms, squatting twenty more pounds, or losing five percent of your current bodyfat. Next, write down all the reasons you want to achieve each goal. Finally, develop a short-term strategy that will allow you to accomplish them. Read this list every day that you train, preferably right before you start warming up. With this kind of mental discipline, it's safe to bet that your workouts will always have a powerful sense of purpose and direction.

Despite all your best efforts, you will still sometimes find yourself in the midst of a bad workout. Here are five solutions to this dilemma which plagues athletes the world over.

### SALVAGING A BAD WORKOUT

#### Go Home

Defeatist as this suggestion sounds,

in many cases it is indeed the best option. This is especially true if you are overly tired, have been training several days in a row, or might possibly be coming down with a cold or flu. Our bodies are actually very good at telling us when to stop; unfortunately many of us aren't so good at listening to the signals. Sometimes you will get past that "blah" feeling in your workouts once you are warmed up and into your first exercise. If you still feel tired and weak, it would not be in your best interest to finish the workout. Go home and rest, so that you can come back next time ready to rock and roll. Skipping a workout when exhausted has never destroyed a physique, but countless injuries have resulted when trainees doggedly persisted at finishing heavy workouts when all signs indicated they should have stopped.

### Make It An All-Machine Day

When it becomes apparent that today won't be a day for setting new personal records, you can still get a good workout by switching to all machines for a day. Machines don't require the tremendous balance, focus, and coordination of free-weight training, so they will allow you to work the muscles without having to worry about form so much. It's often depressing when you can't use your heaviest dumbbells or amount of plates on a bar, but few of us are bothered so much by having to move the pin on a weight stack up a hole or two. Psychologically, this is important. Most of the damage from a bad

workout is to our ego. By switching entirely to machines, your ego will be relatively safe from harm.

### Make It A Pumping Day

Another way to change your focus from negative to positive is to turn the workout into a pumping challenge. With no concern for the amount of weight you use, make it your singular goal to see how much of a pump you can get in whatever muscle group you happen to be training that day. Many of us never take recommended "light days" anyway. This might be a chance to see the impact of very high reps with light weights, used occasionally, can have on your physique. Soon, you might even find what you thought was going to be a wasted workout has suddenly transformed into one kick-ass day at the gym. I can't think of a happier ending to what was potentially going to be a sad chapter in your training memories.

### Your One Favorite Exercise or Bodypart

Say it's leg day, and you've just squatted a meager three reps with 315, a weight you should easily get for ten. Rather than pressing on with an exercise you have already experienced frustration and disappointment with that day, switch to your favorite exercise for quadriceps instead. This should be the one exercise that you could do in your sleep with impressive poundage, one that you have to be care-

ful before you spend an hour on because you love the feel so much. It doesn't matter in this case if it's hack squats, leg presses, or even leg extensions. If it's your favorite exercise, you can't fail. Go ahead and do six to ten sets with just that one movement. I guarantee you'll get a great workout, despite the initial tragedy at the squat rack. Now, don't just use this suggestion as an excuse to "unintentionally" fail on the exercises you hate, merely as an excuse to perform only your favorite exercises. Most trainers hate squats, deadlifts, and chins, yet they are all excellent exercises for mass and power. Another idea is to simply train another bodypart altogether. Assuming you didn't just train it the day before and it isn't still sore from a previous training session, train something else.

How many times have you been in the gym to train one muscle group, only to have a strong urge to train something else instead? Most of ignore this inclination, not trusting our own instincts. We've got it wired it into our brains that we always have to train our bodyparts in the same order, all the time. That's a great creed to follow most of the time, but I would wager that it has robbed all of us from what would have been potentially awesome, productive workouts. Usually we have to motivate ourselves to want to train a particular muscle group. It's much more powerful when it comes naturally to you. If, on your next back day, you have a sudden burning desire to work your arms instead, do it! Burning desire is

the most powerful weapon in your arsenal to build a superb physique. Never take it for granted and toss it aside when it beckons to you.

### Perform One Set of Many Exercises

A final method in salvaging a pathetic workout is to do just one set of many exercises, rather than the standard three or four sets with three to five exercises. Once you recognize that you are having a terrible training day, you automatically start dreading all those repetitious sets. Forget them! Instead, pick five to seven exercises for that bodypart, and resolve to do just one set on them after properly warming up. This will spark your interest and enthusiasm a hundred fold over what you would have experienced doing your usual workout. As you can see, a poor workout should very rarely happen. And should it happen, there is no reason (save going home to recuperate from fatigue or overtraining) why a poor workout can't be transformed into a great workout. Next time you find yourself in the position of having a bad training day, use the above techniques and turn it all around. Remember, a great physique is nothing more than the result of many great workouts.

*Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in this column are the opinions of their respective authors and not the opinions of the U.S. Army, Task Force Adler, or the 22d Signal Brigade. Contact a qualified physician before beginning any exercise or diet routine.*





**“I hope you know what you’ve gotten yourself into,” said MNC-I CSM Ralph Beam to Task Force Adler’s newest NCO Inductees. As time goes on, Task Force Adler NCOs face a challenge that grows ever greater**

By SPC Michael Howard

For many years now, the military has used NCO Inductions as a fraternal welcoming ceremony. The ceremony is intended to support Army values, as well as the impression that the Army’s NCO Corps is a team in the closest, most important sense.

On May 27, behind the Coalition

# A CHARGE EVER MORE DEMANDING

Network Operations and Security Center on Camp Victory, Iraq, Task Force Adler inducted 73 new NCOs into the NCO Corps.

Traditionally, the NCO Induction Ceremony is held for newly promoted sergeants, marking the transition from junior enlisted to leader of Soldiers. Most of the Soldiers with Task Force Adler who were called to active duty in September never had the opportunity to participate in an induction ceremony, which is part of the NCO Development Program, said CSM Thomas J. Clark, the Command Sergeant Major of Task Force Adler. He and Multi National Corps – Iraq Command Sergeant Major CSM Ralph Beam wanted to recognize the Soldiers who had to leave jobs and family to assist in homeland defense.





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“It’s important to have these types of ceremonies to remember our heritage and keep our traditions in the forefront. We set aside this ceremony as a time for NCOs to gather, recognize, and place a solemn charge upon our newly promoted NCO,” Clark said. A portion of the ceremony consisted of “A Soldier’s Request,” in which junior enlisted Soldiers each took a turn stepping up to one of the new NCOs and speaking a request, such as to make sure they are cared for and fed, or treated with respect, or kept informed, or to be led wisely.

Newly inducted NCOs pass through an arch during Task Force Adler’s NCO induction ceremony, symbolizing their transition into the NCO Corps. 73 NCOs were inducted in all.

Guest speaker CSM Beam reminded the Soldiers that the charge placed upon them was not an easy one to keep. “If it was easy to be a leader, everybody would be a leader. The most talked about, written about thing that we learn about every day. I went out to Al Ramadi this week and as I was telling Sergeant Major, not meaning to brag but I got shot at, I was with a crew, a bunch of young Soldiers, a bunch of young leaders led by a sergeant, we got mortared, we got hit with an IED that picked up a 27 ton vehicle and moved it about 10 feet, and all of this was led by a sergeant, a young Sergeant, and that’s who I was following, and that’s probably who brought me back this week and allowed me to come back here.”

CSM Beam stressed the importance of newly minted non-commissioned officers realizing and always remembering that they were leaders, and acting accordingly.

“My challenge to you, sergeant, is every day you get up, you figure out how you’re going to get better. It’s not about your MOS. There’s about 50 MOSs sitting here right now, I’m an infantryman by trade, but right now I’m a 00Z just like all the rest of these Sergeants Major sitting here right now, and it doesn’t matter. I’m a Sergeant first. Every time I get up in the morning, the first thing I put on is my attitude, cause I’m a sergeant. And that’s what everyone should do in the morning, put your attitude on and get out there and be the sergeant they selected you to be. Learn to be the best Sergeant you can be and maybe in 20 years you’ll be a sergeant major, cause you know, if your goal’s not to be a sergeant major at the end of the day then you probably need to go on home, because your heart’s not into it.”

“Even the most cynical or jaded Soldiers present at our Induction walked out that evening just a little different than they walked in. A little taller, more confident, with a spring in their step, and with a resolve to try a little harder to live up to those ideals,” said Clark. Beam summed up the ceremony when he gave the inductees one final word of warning. “If I’ve got one thing for you to listen to today that’s to remember you’re a sergeant. Don’t ever forget it. Don’t ever back down because it’s not going to get any easier. I really hope you understand what you’ve gotten yourselves into.”





# ANSWERING THE CALL TO EXCELLENCE

By SPC Michael Howard





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Sergeant Morales is an ideal, an azimuth intended to point non commissioned officers in the right direction. But for a fictional character, SGT Morales has an amazing number of non-commissioned officers that strive to associate their name with his. Many have tried, but success is the exception, not the rule.

Task Force Adler, in an unprecedented induction ceremony July 13, gave 20 non-commissioned officers the recognition that they had earned.

“This was the first sergeant Morales induction ceremony ever held in the country of Iraq,” said CSM Thomas J. Clark, the Task Force Adler Command Sergeant Major

Not only was the Sgt. Morales Induction the first of its kind in Iraq, it set the bar high for any ceremonies that may follow.

“I’ve been a part of many ceremonies, but this is the first time I’ve seen a ceremony conducted the way this one was done. I don’t know what else to say on top of that. Everything that was said by those young Soldiers and leaders just a few minutes ago is what we all strive to be. It’s what the young Soldiers want from you as a non





commissioned officer,” said CSM Iuniasolua Tului Savusa, the United States Army Europe Command Sergeant Major.

Clark credits an experienced and skillful graphics shop for providing much of the ceremony’s visual flair.

I believe we have the best graphics shop in the country of Iraq. They had a tremendous impact on the ceremony, just the visual impact in the very beginning before a single Soldier stepped on the stage.

The Sergeant Morales selection process is one of the most demanding selection boards in the Army, requiring 90 points per event

on the Army Physical Fitness Test, a qualification of expert on rifle marksmanship, and the supervision of a least two soldiers before a Soldier even qualifies to be recommended by his chain of command. Then, he faces three selection boards.

A Soldier first goes to a battalion level board, which is sat on by a command sergeant major and all his first sergeants. Then he goes to a task force or brigade-level board made up entirely of sergeants major, for us, across the signal community. And finally, he goes to the Multi National Corps-Iraq board, which is on behalf of USAEUR, and sits before five

Left: A swarm of well-wishers descends upon the group of SGT Morales inductees, giving their congratulations to the new members

Right: SGT Robert Cronin of the 440th Signal Battalion instructs his Soldier in the operation of an M249 Squad Automatic Weapon

Bottom Right: Distinguished guests of the SGT Morales ceremony applaud the inductees.

brigade command sergeants major, and the MNC-I command sergeant major. Soldiers who are actually able to be inducted deserve all the recognition





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that Task Force Adler is able to provide them, says Clark. This is a sentiment echoed by the inductees.

“When a soldier sets themselves aside from their peers, it’s important to see the command and the rest of the Army recognizes that they do set themselves away from everybody else,” said SSG Jason Allen Ludlum, one of the 20 inductees.

Clark, a Sergeant Morales and Sergeant Audie Murphy member himself, says it is important to give the new members the recognition that they deserve and that Task Force Adler accomplished exactly that. At this ceremony, you had the Multi National Forces-Iraq Command Sergeant Major CSM Jeffery J. Mellinger, we had the USAEUR Command Sergeant Major CSM Iuniasolua Savusa, and we had the MNC-I Command Sergeant Major CSM Ralph Beam. I think the most important part, though, is that we held a world-class ceremony in the eyes of the inductees. Because that’s who it was for. No matter what distinguished visitors we had, we put on a ceremony that they’ll remember for the rest of their lives. And we videotaped it so that we’ll be able to provide it to their families.

Above all, Clark says, tradition must be maintained, or it will die. The military is steeped in tradition. COL Fredrick A. Cross, the Task Force Adler Commander, and the army have tasked me with continuing the traditions and customs of the army. We’ve both made a pact that no matter what country we’re in, peace or war, we will continue to uphold the finest traditions and customs of the military.

Sgt. Laura A. Pettitt of the 440th Signal Battalion recites the NCO Response to the Soldier’s Request during Task Force Adler’s Sergeant Morales induction ceremony







# TASK FORCE RUNNER: MAKING COMMS HAPPEN IN IRAQ

By MAJ Eric Derynioski



**The 440TH Signal Battalion, “The Road Runners”, a subordinate battalion under 22D Signal Brigade, Darmstadt, Germany, deployed to Iraq in October, 2005. Our original footprint in Iraq was the greater Baghdad area, missions scattered throughout Camp Victory and the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) area, and one element in Al Asad (western Iraq), all supported by our predecessors, the 327TH Signal Battalion (Airborne).**

Approximately three weeks prior to deployment, the battalion’s area of operations increased significantly, with the assumption of missions in Central South from 51ST Signal Battalion (Airborne), and the added operational control of long range communications missions. For these increased missions and responsibilities, the 440TH gained attachment of three companies: Charlie Company, 32D Signal Battalion (also a 22D Signal Brigade asset); and Charlie & Delta Companies, 40TH Signal Battalion, 11TH Signal Brigade (Fort Huachuca, Arizona). The 440TH and 32D are Mobile Subscriber Equipment (MSE) signal battalions, while the attached 40TH units are “Long Range Extension” (LRE) elements. Upon deployment, the whole of the elements formed “Task Force Runner”, based on the unit’s nickname, the Road Runners. Following the replacement of all 327TH & 51ST Signal Battalion (ABN)

assets and responsibilities, as well as multiple long range extension missions, Task Force Runner had 650 Soldiers spread to 18 separate base camps north as far as Tikrit, south to An Diwaniah, west to Al Asad, and to the eastern edges of Baghdad.

This storyline provides some insight into the battalion’s preparations for deployment, some unique solutions to accomplishing the mission while deployed, and some insight to the opportunities our Soldiers had to broaden their horizons.

**WE DON’T HAVE ENOUGH 25Ls, SO WE’LL MAKE THEM!**

A significant shortfall we discovered during our PDSS (Pre-Deployment Site Survey) was the inside and outside plant cabling work the 327th Signal Battalion (ABN) was supporting versus the quantity of 25Ls, traditionally nicknamed “Cable Dogs”, our task force had to deploy. Furthermore, we also

identified a significant shortage of fiber experienced soldiers. If we did have any inbounds, there were very few. My guidance to our company commanders: “We don’t have enough 25Ls in the task force to support the 25L mission, so we will have to make them”.

We coordinated with 5TH Signal Command, specifically the 52D and 6981ST Signal Battalions (see footnote), to receive some hands-on fiber termination training for approximately 20 soldiers from the battalion. These one week blocks provided some fiber theory and hands-on training. To maximize the ability of C/440TH to support mostly cabling missions, we doled out the tactical communications missions to our other companies. Following our deployment, final alignment of missions and assessments of personnel availability, we sliced additional soldiers from C/32D to C/440TH to augment the cable mission. In total, we had a total of roughly thirty five soldiers working cabling missions.

C/32D provided an upwards of 15 soldiers to C/440TH to perform cable install work on a daily basis. At the outset of this augmentation, two or three C/32D soldiers were inserted into C/440TH’s 4-5 Soldier cable teams to get some OJT (On-The-Job Training). As the weeks and months went on and these Soldiers continued to perform 25L missions, we were able to split less C/440TH Soldiers to a cable team by increasing by more experienced C/32D Soldiers. Ultimately, C/32D cable teams were self-sufficient, receiving work orders from C/440TH just as their C/440TH counterparts were. The cable work paid off for C/32D. As

the task force assumed Technical Control Facility missions in the Central South and South East areas of Iraq, C/32D Soldiers took with them valuable skills they acquired from over seven months of cabling experience they gained in working with C/440TH.

#### CONVOY OPERATIONS.

Another requirement that became more evident during our recon was that of dedicated Convoy Security Teams. Our predecessors, the 327TH Signal Battalion, had pulled Soldiers from within its ranks to form its convoy security teams. We quickly determined during the trip that our HHC Commander, Captain Patrick Sullivan, was the best fit and most suited to provide oversight for the initiative. CPT Sullivan was a former combat arms officer, had served in Iraq during the first OIF rotation, routinely supporting convoys during that deployment. He was up for the additional duty. Upon return to Germany from the recon, our companies were tasked to provide nine personnel each to the convoy security team initiative.

Our guidance to the companies for selecting their Soldiers was fairly short and concise: look for volunteers, be selective and screen those volunteers, and look to select soldiers somewhere between the trigger-happy cowboys and the trigger-shy. Bottom line, the soldiers that would be the most likely to have to use deadly force needed to practice restraint in doing so, but not afraid to do so ... and they needed to be professional.

During our last couple of months in Germany before deployment, the teams had been identified and

we conducted some walk-through drills, combat lifesaver training, conducted some ranges together at Grafenwoehr Training Area, and qualified on the 50 caliber machine gun. To provide for easier maneuvering by Soldiers in the vehicles on a constant basis, we also cross-leveled the battalion’s M4s and assigned one to each convoy team member.

The convoy security teams were created along the lines of an aircrew concept: three Soldier teams, an NCO and two lower enlisted members; these teams trained, prepared, and convoyed together. Each member had a specific mission: the NCO was the Truck Commander (TC), plus his driver and gunner. Each team also had a variety of additional duties such as aid and litter team or landing zone team. For every convoy mission, additional duties were tasked out to teams, with primary and alternate teams designated.

Upon deployment, during training operations in Kuwait, the convoy teams continued to train together with the assistance of a team from 327TH Signal Battalion (ABN) that linked up with us in Kuwait. Our Soldiers made significant progress and became closer as teams while in Kuwait, and continued to train as they moved north into Iraq. Eight months later (as of the submission of this article), TF Runner’s convoy teams have become extremely professional in their duties, with a total of over 200 convoys completed, with no fatalities or serious injuries, and zero accidents. Some of the credit for the remarkably safe and incident-free convoy operations conducted is attributed to the Task Force’s S2

(Intel) shop, which spent countless hours conducting threat analyses of routes by day of the week, hour of the day, general threats during a given period, and other intelligence. Most of the credit resides with the convoy personnel themselves, for the leadership of the NCOs and the professionalism displayed by each member of the convoy security teams.

#### MSE GO AWAY!

Even prior to leaving Germany, one of the 22D Signal Brigade’s goals during this deployment was to further reduce the Mobile Subscriber Equipment (MSE) footprint in Iraq through upgrade initiatives. As the S3 of Task Force Runner, I had the opportunity to drive the train for at least our piece of that initiative.

Upon our Transfers of Authority between the 327TH and 51ST Signal Battalions (ABN) at the beginning of November 2005, we assumed an MSE mission of four Node Centers and eleven Small Extension Nodes. By late November, we had a solid grasp of the network, what made it run, its problem areas, where we expected movements of assets, and where we could focus our attention on removing MSE through capabilities replacement.

**THE FIRST TEST:** In early December, we received the warning order that we would assume communications support at a weapons range facility supporting both Coalition and Iraqi Army proficiency training. 3RD Infantry Division (ID) was supporting the range with communications, but they were leaving in January 2006. 3RD ID was supporting the





site with a Command Post Node (CPN), the smallest of packages associated with the Joint Network Node (JNN) family of assets. The textbook answer to this assumption of mission by an MSE unit would have been a Small Extension Node (SEN).

I discussed the mission with our Network Technician or “NET-TECH” (Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Ebeler), and we agreed that a SEN was the likely solution. We also agreed that we did not want to place any additional MSE into

system unless absolutely necessary. Chief Ebeler proposed a data package solution he had been drawing out and I gave him the go-ahead to build, test, and ultimately install it. He dusted off his plans, built the data package, and ran the tests down in the motor pool. Easy. We could support the mission without adding any MSE to the network.

The package, including the satellite assemblage, the data package, and seven personnel (six on the team, plus our senior Automations NCO who deployed just for the

initial install) deployed out several days before the package was required to be in system. We had our problems getting the data package talking to the router back at Camp Victory, which carried on for a few days. The data package was finally brought into system, within our suspense to do so, but not without some pain. We did end up conveying a SEN out to the site when it got close to our suspense and were still having problems. Fortunately, we never had to install the SEN, and the supported customers

enjoyed the quality of increased bandwidth and VoIP telephones – much more than the SEN could provide.

[I owe an overwhelming percentage of the credit for the great strides we made early in our deployment, including MSE displacement, to Chief Ebeler. He was actually assigned to the 40TH Signal Battalion. With the 440TH assuming attachment of the two companies from the 40TH that deployed under the 22D, we received CW2 Ebeler as well, and lucky for us, as the 440TH did not have an assigned NetTech at deployment. Fortunately for us, Chief Ebeler had a healthy MSE background, a wealth of knowledge in automations, and a desire to tinker (perhaps the best feature of a good

warrant officer). Following the arrival of the 440TH’s newly assigned NETTECH, Warrant Officer 1 Paul Fenn, CW2 Ebeler relocated to the 22D Signal Brigade.]

#### HYBRID MSE SOLUTIONS.

One of the limiting factors in our efforts to remove MSE from system was that of the transmission paths to push communications to outsites. For various reasons, commercial radio systems were simply not available to us, at least not at the pace we wanted them. We

had routers, switches, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phones, Ethernet cable, fiber, and even transit cases. What we lacked was the radio systems to push the signal to where we had MSE systems in use if we were to replace them with more efficient IP based equipment. A tactical satellite asset was not going to be justified for lower priority users and short distances, at least not when we had perfectly good MSE supporting the requirements.

One day I asked the question of my NETTECH: “Our MSE LOSs are radio systems ... How can we utilize them to fill the void caused

by a lack of commercial radios?” We had already deployed a similar concept in the tactical satellite mission, so how hard could it be? CW2 Ebeler took the challenge and went to work.

C/32D was tasked to support the testing. With a couple of MSE LOS teams and shelters set up behind our task force TOC (Tactical Operations Center), the science project was underway. CW2 Ebeler set up a makeshift test site in the TOC. Military standard coaxial cable (CX-11230) ran from the LOS shelters outside, and into the TOC through the doorway. He





didn't bother with tables for the transit cases (which incased the routers, switches, and cryptographic equipment), instead just laying on the floor to get eye level with switches, toggles, and digital displays. Into the second day of testing, CW2 Ebeler claimed victory with the experiment – establishing router to router connectivity between two MSE LOS assemblages over CV-8448s, ENCRYPTED! What this meant was that we could deploy an MSE LOS shelter and a transit case data package to its location, establish a radio link with another MSE LOS radio back at a main base, and instead of tying into the MSE network, we would connect directly to a NIPR router. Our data package was then supporting SIPR and NIPR data AND voice (via VoIP). MSE reduction was underway!

With the use of VoIP phones instead of standard MSE phones (Digital Non-Secure Voice Telephone), the 256 kilobits per second of bandwidth normally used strictly for voice phone services was saved and could be better utilized for the data requirements. Additionally, the aggregate bandwidth of 1024 kilobits could be used essentially “on-demand” between SIPR and NIPR depending on what needed the bandwidth at a given time.

We determined the first installation of this newly found (new to us anyway) solution was best tested somewhere easily accessible, so if we experienced problems it was easy to get to (aka, somewhere within the Victory Base Complex boundaries, where we could reach out to without the delays and risks associated with convoys). Following a few trips out to the site and coordinating with the customers, we installed the system relatively smoothly.

**THE DATA PACKAGE:** Our package was a pretty standard solution, with a few improvements. The primary connectivity from the modem was an AES 256 encryption capable router, a SIPR and NIPR 24 port switch, a TACLANE (KG-175), and an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). The AES 256 encryption provides DoD compliant encryption for UNCLASSIFIED traffic, which we utilized for our NIPR connection. We then tunneled SIPR through NIPR via the TACLANE for CLASSIFIED traffic (SIPR). For voice capability, we utilized Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) capability, eliminating a need for any additional analog switches for voice.

By the time we did the installation, we also received our unit assigned NETTECH, Warrant Officer



1 (WO1) Paul Fenn, brand-new out of warrant officer candidate school following fourteen years of enlisted service, achieving the rank of Sergeant First Class in the communications field. Chief Ebeler and I agreed that this first install would likely be his last with the task force, since WO1 Fenn was aboard. So we used this opportunity as a train up for WO1 Fenn, giving him the opportunity to get his hands on some equipment and get familiar with it. Following this validated and successful installation, we started looking at other potential uses for this capability.

Timing is everything sometimes, and in this instance time was working with us. The task force received a warning order that we would be assuming two missions in Baghdad from 3RD Infantry Division upon their departure. The current communications support for these sites was standard MSE, with SENs at both locations utilizing LOS for the transmission path. Following some quick mission analysis, recons of both sites, and support of the from our brigade, we built

data packages like the one we had recently installed. **BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD:**

With a short supply of CV-8448s on hand anyway, we initiated some additional testing to validate the usage of PairGain modems. The PairGains were on-hand, and at approximately \$1,500 a piece as opposed to the CV-8448s at roughly \$7,500 a piece, we could get a lot more for our money if we were to buy any more. Some more testing, and tinkering with modem settings, cable pin-outs, and a lot of patience, & a combined effort of warrant officers and enlisted soldiers claimed victory once again. PairGain modems offered some added features, including extended distances between the LOS assemblage and the data package and the use of WF-16 wire instead of coaxial cable made running cable easier. We could also double the bandwidth of the LOS link (normally limited to one megabit when using older MSE SENs), to its full capability of 2 megabits per second.

For this particular solution, the PairGain modems

connect directly to the data port of the baseband on the radio, bypassing the communications modem, patch panel, and signal entry panel. WF-16 from the PairGain runs from shelter and out to the data package, where another PairGain modem resides.

Following standard military procedures, the equipment was tested back to back first, before sending teams out to their respective sites. The technique always pays off. It gave the communications teams some hands-on time to validate their equipment and build some confidence in it & themselves. Learning from our near crisis with the range mission, we deployed the SENs along with their LOSs and data packages JUST IN CASE. The SENs never went into system for the remainder of our deployment.

As noted above, WO1 Fenn had been aboard for the replacement of the on-base SEN with an MSE LOS and data package solution. The deployment of these two systems was all his, and it was a huge confidence builder for him to have built the packages from the ground up, validated them, worked hand-in-hand with the operators, trained up the operators before they left for their sites, and worked the end to end connectivity with each outsite until they had all services up and running. 22D Signal Brigade Data Engineers also provided a great deal of assistance and prioritization to us in configuring routers, troubleshooting, and supporting our never-ending ideas and tests. We quickly learned that if we related the BDE's assistance to removing MSE from the network, they were normally more than happy to assist.

**COMING TOGETHER.**

With the successful deployment of the TACSAT data package, the first MSE LOS solution, and finally the two added LOS solutions, we had eliminated three SENs from going into system, and paved the way for a fourth coming out of system when we tied in 4TH Infantry Division customers off one of the data packages we installed. We installed one more data package in the Baghdad area, replacing a SEN we had there. The combined reductions in SENs we were able to remove, along with a few base realignments, some full-up commercial upgrades, and economies of force, and the task force dropped from the original four Node Centers and eleven SENs, to just one Node Center and one SEN in system by the end of April. The remaining SEN would drop out when the base closed. Some operational circumstances required this SEN to remain





it due to manpower constraints. With the 440TH destined for inactivation following this deployment, MSE being life-cycled out of existence, and JNN being the newest technology coming to conventional Army forces, this was a win-win situation and no-brainer in my opinion. It provided the task force with a great opportunity to get our Soldiers some hands-on experience on newest communications systems and it kept us busy with communications missions, as opposed to being tagged for increased guard duty requirements. We accepted the mission.

C/32D was given the mission, and by mid-December,

they assumed responsibility for the JNN Hub at Camp Victory. We coordinated for a crash-course in a classroom environment, but the majority of the training was done the old-fashioned way ... getting in there and getting their hands on the equipment.

Later into the deployment, as MSE scaled down, the battlefield also began to change for Task Force Runner. When we realigned our battlespace due to added missions being assumed, C/32D was directed to relocate its forces into

south-east Iraq, forcing a replacement of the JNN Hub support by B/440TH. B/440TH also assumed C/32D's missions throughout the Baghdad and surrounding areas, picking up several data package requirements. We decided on the C/32D to B/440TH swap for several reasons: (1) as C/32D deployed south, they were able to keep company integrity, (2) they had gained many of the skill sets necessary for the upcoming missions, (3) as B/440TH was destined to maintain the last node center in system, located at Victory, they also maintained company integrity while assuming virtually all the tactical communications missions in the Baghdad area, and (4) it gave the task force the opportunity to train an additional platoon on the JNN Hub.

#### TECHNICAL CONTROL FACILITIES:

Just as Iraq has become an ever-changing operational battlefield along with the Command & Control (C2) structure of Coalition Forces to support it, the communications architecture supporting that C2 requirement has also changed. By June 2006, Task Force Runner was once again expanding its geographical and technical boundaries. We were to assume control of several "Tech Control Facilities" or TCFs from the 54TH & 72D Signal Battalions, with some in the central southern regions and others in south eastern areas. The assumption of these missions, although similar to others we were already supporting, was still somewhat of a shift from tactical to strategic, especially with the added workforce of government

contractors.

Following the transitions and mission realignments, C/32D was positioned at four locations, all in support of TCF missions, as well as some outside plant work. When C/32D left Camp Victory for this transition, they also reacquired their convoy security personnel from our consolidated teams, and added to those numbers from within to form a total of 5 teams.

A/440TH, supporting missions in central-south Iraq, acquired one TCF mission due to it falling within the company's current geographical footprint. While supporting only one of these newly transitioned TCFs, A/440TH was spread among seven separate locations, and continued to support both tactical and strategic communications missions.

IN SUMMARY, Task Force Runner's deployment to Iraq was overwhelmingly successful through a lot of time consuming planning and mission analysis and the initiative & intuitiveness of our Soldiers. We constantly challenged our Soldiers to learn new technologies and become proficient in a variety of missions. They reacted, and proved time and time again that given some guidance, a mission, and the tools to perform, they would accomplish the mission. The task force increased knowledge on numerous communications systems and advancing technologies. Others learned some of the most advanced convoy protection systems in use in the military today. Many Soldiers gained valuable OJT with data packages, the JNN Hub, commercial Satellite terminals, and fiber termination. This training will open doors to our Soldiers, in the Army or as civilians.

in system versus us replacing it with a data package. As for the node center, despite the fact that it was down to one SEN, it continued to serve as the Victory Base primary tactical tie-in from throughout Iraq. We also supported much of the Defense Switched Network (DSN) telephone capabilities to the MSE network thru that node center, allowing interconnectivity of DSN and VoIP customers to reach out and talk to tactical telephone users.

#### WHAT ABOUT THE SOLDIERS

#### FREED UP WITH MSE REDUCTIONS:

Throughout this deployment, Soldiers were constantly concerned about what was in store for them when a mission was completed or when a base closed. Soldiers notoriously thought the worst, and the worst thing for a communicator to be tasked with (judging by the concerns of this very requirement) was guard duty. As we reduced the MSE footprint in our areas of responsibility, we continually received new requirements and op-

portunities. Soldiers were relieved that they were able to continue doing something communications related. ANYTHING BUT GUARD DUTY!!!

#### JOINT NETWORK NODE HUB:

In late November, the task force was given the opportunity to assume responsibility for the Joint Network Node (JNN) Hub located on Victory Base. 3RD Infantry Division communicators had been operating it, but 4TH ID coming in to replace 3RD ID couldn't support



# LEAVING AL KASIK

By **CPT Adam Collett**

An ivory Islamic mosque commands the horizon here, jutting out of the sand and dwarfing the otherwise imposing security fence in the immediate background, as well as the mountains in the distance. In the June twilight, arid summer winds only barely muffle the baritone male voice wailing the traditional prayers over the several loudspeakers pointed toward the inside of the base. In one direction, the prayers echo over a large field, and in another, along the exterior walls of a long barracks building

almost adjacent to the mosque. The mosque and barracks both are inside the confines of Base Al Kasik, well within the predominantly Kurdish northern part of Iraq. Under an Iraqi flag waving lazily in those same hot winds, and not 150 meters from the speaker horns from which the prayers emanate, is the communications site for the

136th Signal Battalion's D22 Small Extension Node (SEN) team.

The Iraqi flag flies at Al Kasik (pronounced al-KIZ-ik) because the base is primarily occupied and run by a contingent of three to five thousand Iraqi Army troops. By comparison, the coalition troops here number only in the dozens, and among them are the members

of the 3rd Iraqi Division Military Transition Team. Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Robert Riggs, an advisor with the 3rd MTT, says the Iraqi troops they support are responsible not only for parts of the Syrian and Turkish borders, but also for the entire portion of

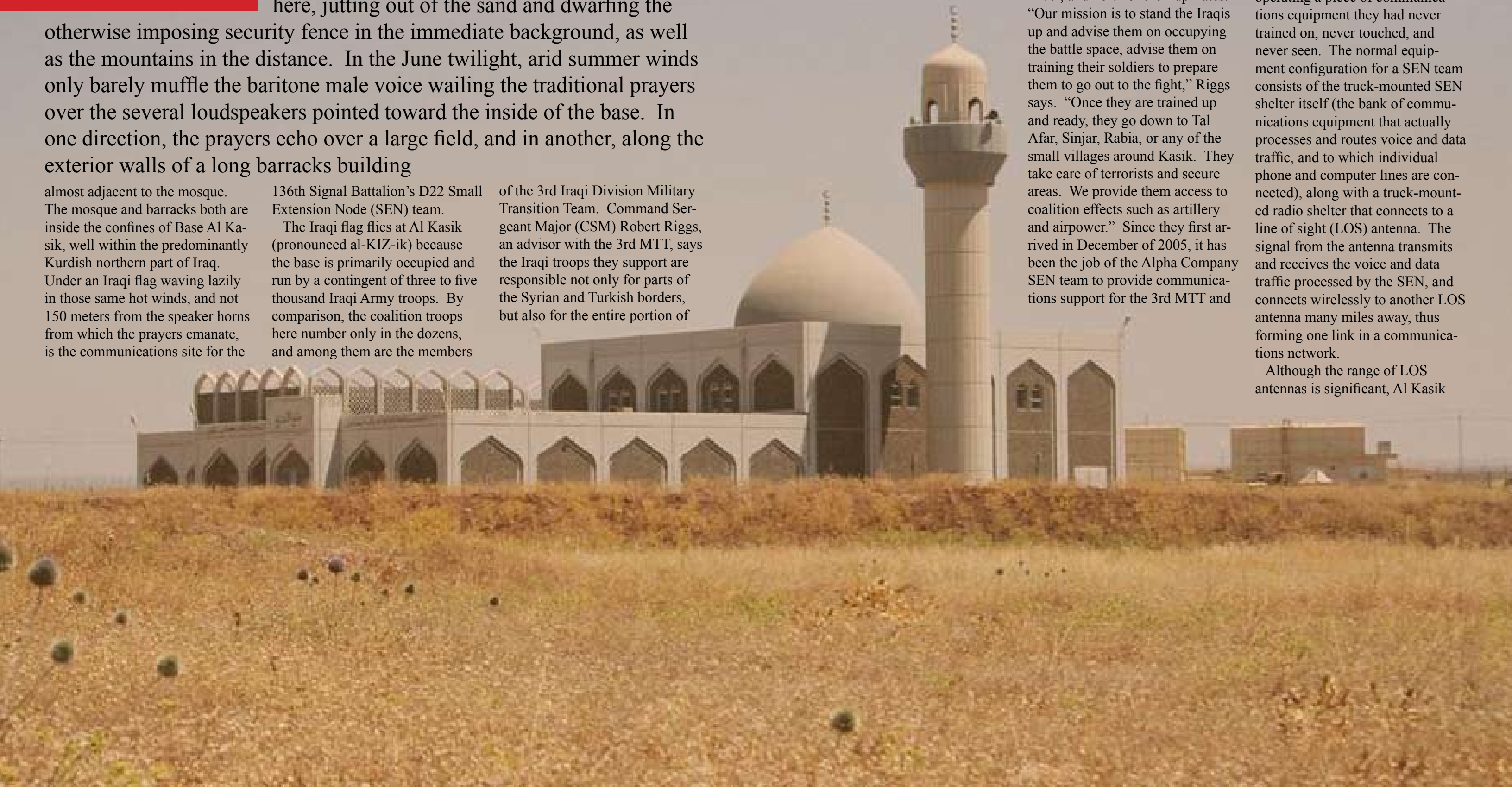
**In supporting an the Iraqi-run base of Al Kasik, the Soldiers of small extension node D22 faced the challenge of mastering Signal equipment that they had no training on. How they overcame the hurdles and helped stand up an Iraqi base**

Iraq west of Mosul and the Tigris River, and north of the Euphrates. "Our mission is to stand the Iraqis up and advise them on occupying the battle space, advise them on training their soldiers to prepare them to go out to the fight," Riggs says. "Once they are trained up and ready, they go down to Tal Afar, Sinjar, Rabia, or any of the small villages around Kasik. They take care of terrorists and secure areas. We provide them access to coalition effects such as artillery and airpower." Since they first arrived in December of 2005, it has been the job of the Alpha Company SEN team to provide communications support for the 3rd MTT and

several other entities that comprise the small coalition contingent headquartered at Al Kasik.

Upon arrival late last year, the team of six to eight soldiers from the Houston, Texas based company faced the challenge of learning and operating a piece of communications equipment they had never trained on, never touched, and never seen. The normal equipment configuration for a SEN team consists of the truck-mounted SEN shelter itself (the bank of communications equipment that actually processes and routes voice and data traffic, and to which individual phone and computer lines are connected), along with a truck-mounted radio shelter that connects to a line of sight (LOS) antenna. The signal from the antenna transmits and receives the voice and data traffic processed by the SEN, and connects wirelessly to another LOS antenna many miles away, thus forming one link in a communications network.

Although the range of LOS antennas is significant, Al Kasik





was so far from the Battalion's primary network that another form of connection had to be used. So, in lieu of an LOS radio shelter, the soldiers of D22 had to learn how to use a tactical satellite radio and dish assemblage called a SMART-T to connect to the nearest node. Under this set up, the traffic would be beamed up to the satellite and back down to the Battalion's main network hub at Contingency Operating Base (COB) Speicher in Tikrit.

The 136th Signal is part of the 22nd Signal BDE headquartered in Baghdad. Because the unit deployed with a fill company from outside the battalion, it operates under the name Task Force Southern Lightning. In June, Task Force Commander Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Timothy Smith made his most recent of several visits to the D22 soldiers. LTC Smith says, "These guys did a phenomenal job, learning equipment they've never seen before, mastering that equipment, and learning how to troubleshoot." The team that first hit ground late in 2005 had a steep learning curve, but was confident by March, when Staff Sergeant (SSG) Juan DeLaVega relocated from Speicher to Al Kasik to give the team a much-needed manpower boost. "It was chaotic at first," DeLaVega says. "Myself, I just like to know the equipment before working on it." Like the others, SSG DeLaVega had no school training whatsoever, but found that with some assistance from his more experienced team members, and through careful study of the technical manual, he was troubleshooting within a couple of days. LTC Smith notes, "Really, that's what being a soldier in a signal organi-



An Iraqi soldier pulls guard at Al Kasik. "Our mission is to stand the Iraqis up and advise them on occupying the battle space, advise them on training their soldiers to prepare them to go out to the fight," CSM Robert Riggs says.

## 136TH SIGNAL BATTALION

zation is all about: knowing your equipment, how to troubleshoot, and how to work around problems or get them fixed."

Despite this challenge, the soldiers of SEN D22 established a high standard of customer service from the start. Staff Sergeant (SSG) Kevin Bellow, team chief for D22, says his crew started off with a goodwill gesture of sorts. "A lot of the [phone] lines were

in bad shape when we first got up here, so we repaired a lot of them, and that fixed a lot of the problems." Another member of the squad, SGT Andrew Moss, echoes this. "My focus was 100% customer satisfaction, no matter what it took." Traditionally, Signal units provide the hub for tactical phone service, while subscriber units are responsible for actually running the wire from their areas to that hub. Moss says that's the way it was when D22 arrived, "but we took the reins on that and ran lines for everybody." Bellow indicates that this above-and-beyond assistance has much to do with the fact that the units they support are very top-heavy – they don't have a lot of service members from the lower enlisted ranks. "A lot of times we go the extra mile to go out there and repair those lines because they don't have the soldiers to do it." That proactive focus on service

did not go unnoticed. Third MTT Commander LTC Bob Chappell says "They come [to us] and find out how they can better service our needs."

The soldiers of D22 maintained that focus on customer service even after they received word in late May that their mission there was soon to end. LTC Smith says the completion of their work is part of the bigger picture. "The overall strategy for the Brigade is, where possible, to transition from tactical communications systems to commercial off-the-shelf systems," Smith relates. Switching to commercial communications equipment allows the Army to rotate unit personnel without shipping trucks and generators, which could eventually enable a complete hand-off to civilians or local nationals.

At Al Kasik, the signal support of the manpower-intensive SEN and SMART-T combination is being replaced by a piece of equipment called a Traffic Terminal. The Traffic Terminal is a smaller, self-contained system that still connects to the network via satellite, but requires only one or two people to operate it. The units being supported at Al Kasik are going to miss not only some of the tactical phone capabilities of the SEN, but also the personal touch of a dedicated signal team. "I'm an old sergeant major, and I like to have the signal guys here who have their equipment and know what they are doing," CSM Riggs explains.

The D22 team members have not only had to maintain their proficiency in communications, but also in basic soldiering and force protection, because like every



base within the Iraqi theater, Al Kasik has not been completely immune to the conflict that persists throughout the country. In fact, the 136th soldiers were on hand to help with the response to the two most widely reported events to occur at the base in the last year. Both occurred within the same 24 hours, and that day just happened to be the day that SSG DeLaVega was reporting to Al Kasik. DeLaVega was just getting off the helicopter around the time of the first incident, a suicide bombing just outside the front gate, where the Iraqi Army was recruiting new soldiers. DeLaVega says, “It opened my eyes. I didn’t know what I was coming into, and I didn’t know that the majority of the people here were Iraqi soldiers.” The force protection stance was already elevated when the second incident took place later that night, inside the base. An American soldier observed a person placing a suspicious package outside the window of a crowded computer lab; the package turned out to be an explosive device. Although the device went off, the lab was evacuated before anyone was hurt and the would-be bomber was apprehended.

The Task Force soldiers played a

role in the actions that followed the attack. “We didn’t know if there were any more insurgents on the base,” SSG Bellow says. “I was worried about my soldiers. My main thing out here is safety.” For the rest of the night, SSG Bellow’s troops helped pull security and patrol the perimeter of the American living area. And because the per-

son who placed the bomb had been wearing an Iraqi Army uniform, the troops had to conduct gunpoint searches of their allied Iraqi soldiers until security was restored. LTC Chappell notes that the in some ways, the American contingent at Al Kasik is a small base within a larger base. “We circle the wagons and protect ourselves. You’ve got to be able to rely on a fellow American soldier and these guys were a part of the team.” Riggs adds, “The guys stepped right in, donned their IBAs and Kevlar, and were on the line until we had the situation secure.” SGT Moss perhaps sums it up best: “It

was an interesting night. We went from signal soldiers to infantrymen for a couple of hours.”

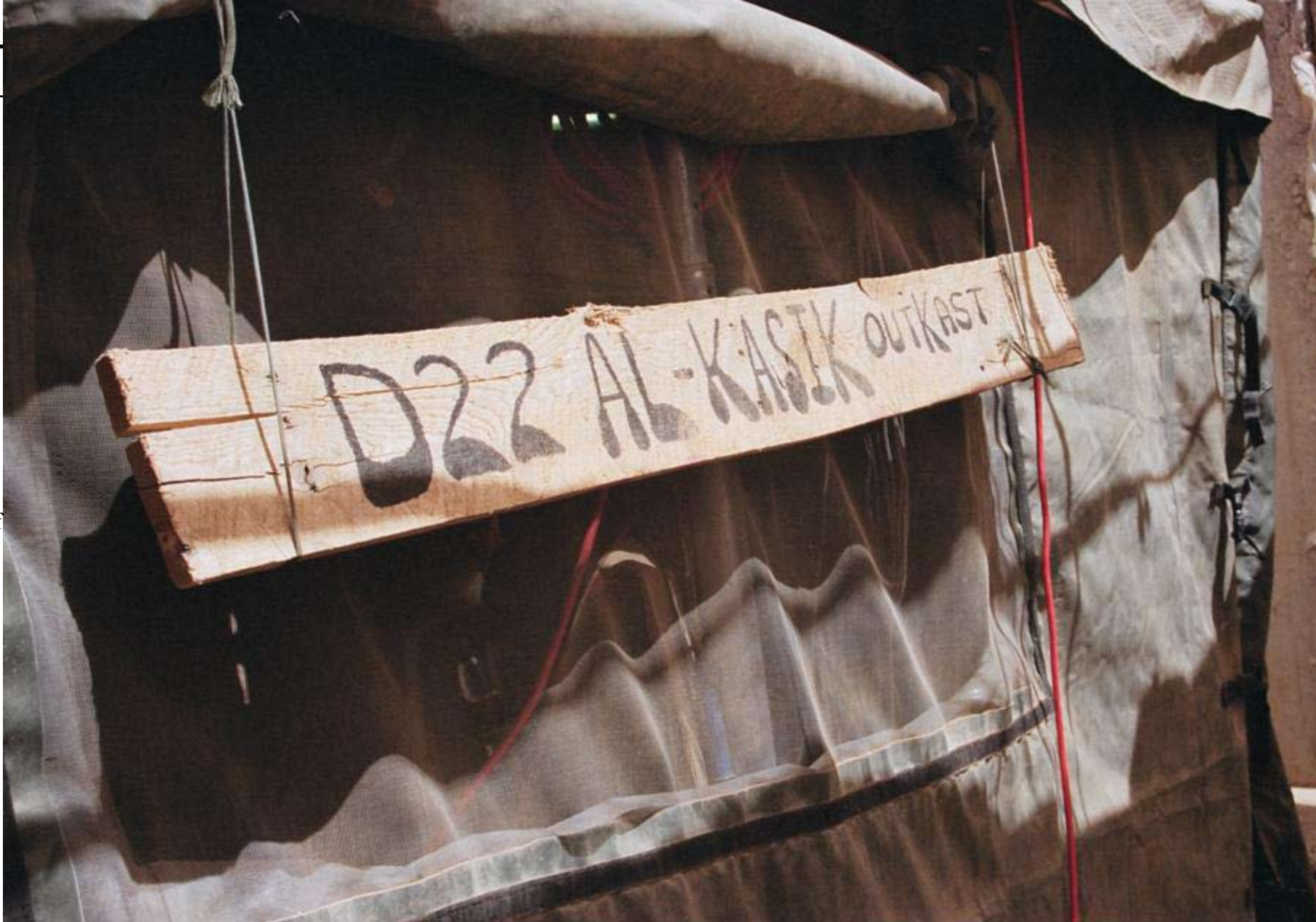
Between the day-to-day signal work and the contributions to force protection, the members of the 3rd MTT are quick to praise the efforts that D22 has made on their behalf. “I think they are typical of 22nd Signal BDE quality,” LTC Chappell says. “[They are] a very, very mission-oriented crew.” CSM Riggs agrees. “These guys are warfighters. They may not be out on the streets of Tal Afar, but they have their bootstraps pulled up.” Riggs notes, “Instead of grumblin’ and rumblin’, they locked

and loaded, leaned forward in the foxhole, engaged the situation and did an excellent job.”

The Alpha Company SEN team is the only Task Force Southern Lightning element to be located on a non-U.S. lead base. Though the MTT and other coalition teams have more day-to-day interaction with the Iraqis than the 136th Signal team, the contact is always there. Daily, the signaleers navigate through a series of on-post checkpoints manned by Iraqi jundis (enlisted soldiers), and even share a barracks building with a number of Iraqi interpreters.

Even with interpreters available,

though, language is sometimes still a barrier, and that is just one of several challenges of living and working on an Iraqi base. Among them: learning not to rely on the basic services taken for granted on U.S. bases. CSM Riggs notes that as a whole the Iraqis seem to live for the day and not worry about tomorrow. “Life here at Kasik is not like on an American FOB,” Riggs says. “Sometimes you have electricity and sometimes you don’t. There’s very little rationing of supplies. There’ve been times when we’ve seen them watering the grass, and the very next day you don’t have water.”



**“It was an interesting night. We went from signal soldiers to infantrymen for a couple of hours.”**  
**- SGT Andrew Moss**



There are other amenities that soldiers at Al Kasik cannot enjoy. The troops miss getting mail daily as they would at a larger base. (They're lucky to get it once every two weeks.) Earlier this year, there was an American dining facility open temporarily, but before and since, the only food prepared at Al Kasik has been at an Iraqi dining facility, where there is no western food prepared; the facility serves mostly chicken, rice, lamb, and flat bread. Although his troops will tell you that they get used to it, SSG Bellow notes, "It's pretty much the same thing every day." And if the Iraqi dining facility is not operational, the only other choices are MREs and bulk frozen items, both of which have to be convoyed in from larger bases.

The story of life at Al Kasik is not all negative, though. The 136th soldiers have gotten opportunities to participate in Iraqi Army weapons ranges, firing AK-47s, rocket propelled grenades, and British Sterlings. SSG Bellow says, "That is something a lot of [American] soldiers will never get to experience." By virtue of being the senior ranking leader for his signal site, SSG Bellow has also gotten to promote a soldier for the first time during his tenure at Al Kasik. LTC Chappell prefers to focus on a more intangible benefit. "On an American FOB, you don't get the interaction with what we are trying to do here in the country of Iraq," Chappell says. "We work hand-in-hand with our partner Iraqis here."

Hand-in-hand also describes the working relationship that developed between the D22 members and the other coalition units that



## CSM -- 136th is up to speed

The third and fourth years of the Iraq War have stoked a discussion (some say debate) in the pages of Stars and Stripes and other news publications covering the conflict. The contention centers around whether Reserve Component troops receive training that is equal to

their Active Duty counterparts, and how well these reservists actually perform once they deploy. Don't mention that debate to Command Sergeant Major Robert Riggs of the 3rd Iraqi Division MTT team when it comes to "his" signal soldiers for the past six months. "They were

so professional and good, I actually thought they were regular Army." Then one night he was visiting with some of the 136th Signal Battalion soldiers and asked, "How come all you guys are from Texas?" Surprised that he didn't already know the answer, one of them confirmed for Riggs that they were all members of a National Guard unit, not

just from the same state, but the same city as well. "And I never thought that by just seeing the job they do, the proficiency level, and the teamwork that they display while they are working," Riggs confesses. While the debate may continue, it doesn't seem to have taken hold yet in the small U.S. Army element at Base Al Kasik.

make up the small band at this northern base. "There's only a limited number of Americans up here at Al Kasik," Chappell says, "and it fosters a family environment where we look out for each other." LTC Chappell is proud to know all of the 136th Signal Battalion soldiers by name. And for everything from cooking and cleaning to briefings and convoys, CSM Riggs has never lost confidence in the combined group's ability to get things done. "With no major coalition maneuver elements [at Kasik], we all just work together to make things happen."

Even in his relatively few visits, LTC Smith has seen first-hand that this dynamic works. "I'm just so proud that these soldiers were able to deploy so far – from home and from Battalion headquarters – and be able to work as a team and provide good support," Smith says. "They are an excellent example for these Iraqi soldiers here of how to be soldiers and how to provide support to your higher headquarters." Team chief SSG Bellow is proud of this recognition, but is clear on how it came to be. "It was a challenge coming out here, and I feel like I've met the challenge and that my soldiers have met the challenge. The mission could not have been successful without them."

As the D22 SEN soldiers prepare to end operations at Al Kasik, LTC Chappell reflects on what the MTT's operations will be like once the Alpha Company team has reported back to the Task Force Headquarters at COB Speicher. "We will never forget them," Chappell says. "Their dedication to the mission cannot be replaced by machinery."



TASK FORCE ADLER

# COMMANDER'S



# CONFERENCE

AUGUST 31- SEPTEMBER 1

THE WAY AHEAD . . . REFLECTING ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
OF TASK FORCE ADLER